Coffman Statement on H.R. 5136, National Defense Authorization Act

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(WASHINGTON) - Rep. Mike Coffman (R-CO), Marine Corps combat veteran and member of the House Armed Services Committee made the following statement today. Coffman opposed passage of H.R. 5136 following Democrat leaders decision to attach an amendment that ignores formal input from military personnel on repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell:

"Despite bipartisan opposition from both the Armed Services Committee Chairman and Ranking Member, Democrat leaders attached an amendment to the defense bill that will repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell without ever listening to the voices of our service members and their families. I am opposing this bill because Congress should consider the opinions and concerns of those who will be most affected by this change before making a decision on Don't Ask Don't Tell."

"All four service chiefs contacted the House Armed Services Committee prior to last night's floor vote in opposition to the amendment. They want the study to go forward as planned and allow Members of Congress to review the findings before making a final decision. With this amendment the department is essentially conducting a study to solicit the input of our military members on an issue that they know has already been decided, completely negating the value of their input."

"There are also significant concerns over a change mandated by the amendment that Members of Congress will no longer review the findings. Instead, responsibility and the ability to reverse the policy is delegated to the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Both Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen are appointed by the President and serve at his pleasure."

"I voted 'no' today because it is important that the Department of Defense have an opportunity complete the study in earnest before this policy is reversed."

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